

and other waders, coots and moorhens. This extensive marshland may very well be a candidate for inclusion in the Ramsar list as a wetland of international importance.

The lake in the centre of Jamnagar, a busy industrial town, is a veritable paradise for

birdwatchers. Scores of Greater Flamingos, hundreds of ducks, waders, terns and coots and many cormorants, darters, ibises and moorhens, not to say skimmers, crowd this shallow lake.

277 SINDH HOUSING SOCIETY,  
PUNE-411 007,  
May 4, 1983.

PRAKASH GOLE

## 12. A NOTE ON THE STATUS OF *BRACHYPTERYX CRYPTICA*

In March 1979, in the Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh, our joint Smithsonian-Bombay Natural History Society Expedition collected a series of five specimens of a bird species which Dr Sálím Ali and I assumed we had not previously encountered in our Indian field studies. It was a small, buff-brown, undistinctive chat-like bird, which I subsequently described as a new species of shortwing thrush, *Brachypteryx cryptica* (Ripley, 1980). I postulated that this new form was most closely related to the poorly known *Brachypteryx hyperythra*, from Sikkim and northeastern India.

On returning to Arunachal Pradesh for continued ornithological field investigation in December-January 1981-82, we collected four more specimens, noting in one case the typical chat-like stance of an individual standing on an exposed rock. Later in Calcutta we saw three more specimens collected by the Zoological Survey of India, eight months earlier, in 1981, these being identified as the new *Brachypteryx*. At this point, Dr. Sálím Ali and I began to have reservations. Could the species be a timaliine? In Washington, consultation with Dr Richard Zusi revealed the fact that the nasal operculum in our new species is only

partly closed, thus resembling forms in the genus *Trichastoma* (a timaliine). Additional evidence, the degree of fusion of the basal phalanges of digits three and four (greater in *Trichastoma*), coupled with the slightly longer rictal bristles, placed these birds in that difficult timaliine genus. No specimens of *Trichastoma tickelli assamense* had been identified by us, although we had collected the species to the north in heavy undergrowth in the Mishmi Hills in 1946. Thus my supposed shortwing becomes a synonym of *Trichastoma tickelli assamense*.

None of the birds we collected uttered a sound, a factor which, added to the presence of other shortwings in the area, and none of the *Trichastoma abbotti* or *Pellorneum* which might have reminded us of *assamense* (the widespread *Pellorneum ruficeps* was of course common and noisy) served to throw us off the scent completely.

The boundary separating the smaller chat-like thrushes (Turdinae) from the similar small Indochinese babblers (Timaliinae) is poorly defined. *Trichastoma* is a timaliine genus generally considered to be on this borderline (Deignan 1964). A perusal of the original designations of many taxa now included in

## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

*Trichastoma* shows that earlier workers have had difficulty separating the shortwing *Brachypteryx* from this babbler genus. *T. bicolor*, *T. rostratum macropterum*, *T. sepiarium*, *T. m. malaccense*, and *T. m. poligene* were all originally placed in the genus *Brachypteryx* by their describers. Thus even a wary ornithologist can be trapped. A further study of the generic limits of the genus *Trichastoma* is planned.

One final note on construction of names in the genus *Trichastoma*: Deignan has considered the genus name to be neuter, and has altered all modifying names accordingly. In order to bring the nomenclature of my A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN into accord with Deignan, species no. 1166 (p.

322, 2nd ed.) should read: *Trichastoma tickelli assamense*, (not *assamensis*).

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,  
WASHINGTON, DC. 20560, U.S.A.  
May 18, 1983.

S. DILLON RIPLEY

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### 13. SOME NOTES ON THE BREEDING OF THE COMMON BAYA (*PLOCEUS PHILIPPINUS*)

On 12th October 1969, HA while looking for duck and snipe (which were not found!) in a marsh along the Shil-Kalyan Road, Thana District, near Bombay, saw large flocks of Bayas (*Ploceus philippinus*) flying from one patch of grass (*Coix lachryma-jobi*) to another. In one place, two birds in female plumage were seen carrying grass. Closer examination revealed seven or eight nests in various early stages of construction spread over a distance

of about 20 yards in a patch of reeds 100 yards long and about 10 yards wide bordered by a knee-deep ditch of water along the side, where the nests were visible from outside. The nests were slung from one or two reed-stalks about 7 feet from the ground. They were not hung from a single point as are normal baya nests; the area of contact extended over three or four inches along the stalks. They also appeared to be of a coarser and looser texture.